

Mr. Les Whitten  
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4/11/77

Dear Les,

Relax and I'll spell it out. None of it is personal. Were it I'd not take the time. I thought I'd explained it before. If now I'm sorry for thinking I had. I know you don't control either the column or its content.

Perhaps you can have some input. I do not assume you are a crook or a whore and I do assume your preference is for good, honest journalism. So when the column is crooked or when it whores around in the field of my expertise I do not recriminate against you and I do not hold you personally responsible. However, I do want to put you in a position to meet your obligations to Jack and to help you both meet those professional responsibilities he controls and I do not see being met.

The day you wrote I wrote you. Again the next day. Each over a specific column. Obviously I expect no love from Jack for this, any more than he has manifested normal journalistic curiosity in the past. If he wanted to do something for me I do not see what he could do and I do not ask it. My books are not in the stores and personal publicity, as you know, holds no attraction for me.

If you have paid attention you should have noticed that in writing you recently I've introduced a few new thoughts. The crap you are being fed (you pl.) is getting close to libel if the column goes farther on it. There is what kids and grandkids will think.

And ~~maybe~~ maybe someday there will be a standing off from the story, the realization this is not about crooked tax collectors but a story that goes to the integrity of society and its basic institutions. Any realization of this kind would hurt me, friend, and I do not assume that human emotion does not extend to others. Including their wives and ~~kids~~ kids.

So it is not personal, it is not selfish. If it hurts you personally I'll stop informing you. Even when I'm strongly disappointed I don't think I've merely cussed.

This is a pretty Byzantine situation. If you personally have had nothing to do with these propaganda ploys, great because I like you and because I don't want your kids not to respect their dad. For whatever it is worth to you my advice is to stay away from them. We can't even be certain about what we write because perfection is not a human state. If you have nothing to do with them you have no cause for personal shame. There is another advantage. There can't be accusations based on your RFE past, those you have heard as well as I. Jack's record on this does not persuade he is going to change. So don't you be the goat.

I was 64 the day you wrote, Friday. You know something of my medical situation. That day and three other days last week I put in 19 or more hours. I got no more than 5 hours sleep last night. So I do these things in haste, without time to reread and correct and I know I should not. But I also do not know anyone else who is doing what I do. In what time I have I want to do what I can. (Could I use an intern/apprentice!) I don't think I ever do anything for the purpose of causing hurt. In itself that also is not constructive. It was not my purpose to hurt you personally. I'm sorry if I did. But if you can make an effort to end the torrent of bad stuff, bad journalism, that I would like.

Best,